

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB PINS PINT ZA
SUBJ: RAILWAY STRIKE ENDING

REF: LUSAKA 3078

1. THE STRIKE WHICH HAS VIRTUALLY PARALYZED MAIN LONE-OF-RAIL FROM THE COPPERBELT TO LIVINGSTONE (REFTEL) FOR THE PAST NINE DAYS APPEARS TO BE ENDING AS OF SEPTEMBER 7. RAILWAYS ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER RICHARD VEENIS TOLD EMBOFF THAT ABOUT 80 PERCENT OF THE WORK FORCE WAS NOW BACK ON THE JOB AND HE EXPECTED FULL SHIFTS ON SEPTEMBER 8. EARLIER, GENERAL MANAGER ANDERSON MAZOKA TOLD THE PRESS THAT ACCORDING TO INITIAL ESTIMATES, THE STRIKE WILL COST THE RAILWAYS OVER A MILLION DOLLARS IN LOSSES. MAZOKA EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT ACTUAL LOSSES MIGHT RUN SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER.

2. DISCUSSIONS OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS BETWEEN UNION LEADERS, RAILWAYS OFFICIALS, AND OFFICERS OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL SERVICES RESULTED IN AGREEMENT ON THE AMOUNT AND METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL WAGE INCREASES FOR THE RAILWAY
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WORKERS. LABOR MINISTER DINGISWAYO BANDA ANNOUNCED THAT THE INCREASES WOULD CONFORM TO THE GOVERNMENT'S AGREEMENT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND REGARDING A LIMITATION OF FIVE PERCENT ON RAISES FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. BANDA SAID THE FORMULA FOR THE INCREASES AWARDED TO THE WORKERS TOOK INTO CONSIDERATION THE AVERAGE SALARY STRUCTURES IN THE INDUSTRY AND CONFORMED WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE IMF. UNION LEADERS

HAVE BEEN MEETING WITH BRANCH MEMBERS TO EXPLAIN THE SITUATION.

3. COMMENT: ACCORDING TO ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER VEENIS, ALTHOUGH THE STRIKE LASTED ONLY A LITTLE MORE THAN A WEEK, IT NEVERTHELESS HAS HAD A SERIOUS IMPACT. NEARLY 60,000 TONS OF COPPER IN THE PIPELINE FOR DAR WERE HELD UP, AND AN ADDITIONAL 50-60,000 TONS ARE READY TO GO AT THE MINES. THE STRIKE ALSO HALTED COAL DELIVERIES FROM MAABA COLLIERIES. WITH THE PRIORITY WHICH MUST BE GIVEN TO THESE COMMODITIES, ONCE THE RAILWAYS RETURN TO FULL OPERATIONS THERE WILL BE SOME FURTHER DISRUPTION IN THE SHORT-HAULING OF THE STAPLE MAIZE. ALTHOUGH THE WORKERS APPEAR TO HAVE ACCEPTED THE LIMITED WAGE INCREASE, THE AGREEMENT STILL FALLS FAR SHORT OF THEIR ORIGINAL DEMANDS. IT SEEMS LIKELY, THEREFORE, THAT WORKER DISCONTENT WILL REMAIN HOLDING POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER PROBLEMS. CLINGERMAN

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